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Title

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GRANT



By General John C. Smith, Commander

- Department of Illinois

Grand Army of the Republic



GRANT

An address delivered at the
23d Annual Reunion of
the Old Soldiers' and
Sailors' Association of Jo
Daviess County, Turner
Hall, Galena, August 15
1905

General John C. Smith, Commander
Department of Illinois
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CHICAGO

Dr. S. 26 Apr. 12



ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT, COMRADES, LADIES AND FRIENDS:

As an old citizen of Galena I am pleased to meet this splendid audience of comrades and friends and return your hearty greeting. As I came upon this platform I was hailed by Comrade Will Perry, now of Elizabeth, the first boy whom I enlisted in my company for the War, and whose father also enrolled with me for "Three Years." The next to greet me was my old brigade commander, Major-General Smith D. Atkins, of the city of Freeport. While on every hand were comrades of all grades, non-commissioned and commissioned, from Private Perry to General Atkins, rejoicing that they were gathered together once more before summoned to cross the pontoon for duty on the eternal camping ground upon the other shore.

I would like to talk to my comrades of the early days, when we went a-soldiering. Of the marches, bivouacs and battles in which we were engaged during those long four years of terrible conflict, and the return home. But having taken up some incidents in the life of our illustrious citizen and peerless soldier, Ulysses S. Grant, I leave all those stories to the comrades who are to follow me and will speak to you of our old commander. Every incident in the civil or military life of General Grant can but be of interest to all Galenians, and should be repeated by the old and learned by the young. When General Grant passed to the unseen world, I was in Springfield serving the State as Lieutenant-Governor, and had as private secretary an old soldier, Major Eugene A. Routte, who wrote the following beautiful tribute to General Grant

upon the fly-leaf of a scrap book and gave it to me, November 25, 1885:

“GRANT.”

“No one knows when a great man is born. Few, as a rule, recognize his greatness during life—but he dies—a nation mourns, and the world goes to his funeral.”

When the guns of Fort Sumter awakened a sleeping land, the hero of the succeeding war had no place in its dreams. His name was unknown, his person was unfamiliar. Avenues where Notoriety drove her gilded cars knew him not. His foot-falls had started echoes only in the humble by-ways of life. A long line of illustrious ancestry may give title to pre-eminence, but this man rode no steed of pedigree to the forefront of fortune. He walked solitary and alone and dust covered. Long after the drum-beat “to arms” smote upon the drowsy ear of Peace, no human eye saw the glory of his future. God had written it in characters which could only be read in the lurid glare of battle flame; but it was His handwriting. The destiny which shapes the end of Man had found as yet no use for the prodigious possibilities of Grant’s nature. Fame was not his patrimony—it was the wage he earned.

General Grant was unknown at the outbreak of the Rebellion, except to his neighbors and a small circle of friends, yet in four brief years his name and fame became known to all the earth and his deeds indelibly impressed upon the pages of history. A decade following and his practical statesmanship won him a place second only to his proven military ability, of which the orator can never cease to sound his praise or the historian to tell of his wise suggestions. While his services in the field and in the presidential chair will for ages illumine the pages of history, the American people will never cease to love him for the purity of his home life and the sterling dignity of his character.

Were I to speak to you only of the military career of Ulysses S. Grant, I would tell you that he held no second place among the soldiers of any age, not even to the great Napoleon whose Italian campaign victories startled the world. While that campaign was the wonder of the military critics of the

day and has been the study of soldiers since. Grant's investment of Vicksburg after running the batteries, crossing the Mississippi below, and marching and fighting for twenty days, is worthy to be ranked with it, and all which Napoleon claimed for his men in that campaign is justly due to General Grant's command. Without quartermaster or commissary supplies, or base for their storage, Grant crossed a mile wide and deep river, marched two hundred and fifty miles over a rough, hilly and heavily timbered country intersected by deep and bridgeless rivers, fought five battles—Port Gibson, Raymond, Jackson, Champion's Hill and Big Black River, capturing eighty pieces of siege and field artillery, the Capital City of Jackson and the batteries at Grand Gulf. Seven thousand prisoners were taken, and as many more of the enemy were killed or wounded. Two armies of the Confederates, commanded by their best generals, Joseph E. Johnston and John C. Pemberton, each equal in number to the Federal forces, were prevented from uniting and were handsomely whipped in detail.

All this was accomplished in *twenty days*, during which time but five days' rations were issued, and the troops had to forage for additional food in a sparsely settled country where supplies were already scarce. As this twenty-day campaign ended with the investment of Vicksburg, forty more days' investment and assault brought its surrender, with 32,000 prisoners, 170 guns and 50,000 stand of small arms together with a large supply of ammunition for the same.

From a brief examination of the movements of these commanders, we learn that Napoleon entered upon his campaign in Italy with a veteran army and double the number of troops opposed to him; while Grant, whose forces were composed of volunteers, many of whom had never been under fire, crossed the Mississippi with one-half the number of the enemy and he was not reinforced until after Vicksburg was invested.

Of this splendid campaign, the noble-hearted President Lincoln wrote:

"MY DEAR GENERAL:"

"I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgment for the almost

inestimable service you have done the country. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do what you finally did, march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo Pass expedition and the like could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join General Banks, and when you turned northward, east of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make a personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong."

Much other evidence might be presented of the soldierly qualities of our commander were it necessary, but I will content myself with a brief reference to one or two.

We are reading daily of the war in the East, and being told of the great battles of ten to fifteen days' duration by the largest armies the world ever saw. In fact, everything connected with this Japanese-Russian war is magnified out of all proportion, and more men are reported killed than wounded, thus reversing the record of all previous wars. It is evident that the writers have never been soldiers, and very doubtful if they have yet heard of our Civil War. What soldier of that war or reader of its battles but knows that Grant commanded more men than are in either army now engaged in Manchuria, and that while in person with the Army of the Potomac, he was directing the movements of the armies under Sherman and those west of the Mississippi, more than one thousand miles away? Where is the soldier or student but knows that our old commander set the pace for continuous battle, as in the investment of Vicksburg, and as you, my comrades of the armies of the Cumberland, Tennessee and Ohio, learned in the one hundred and twenty days' fighting of the Atlanta campaign, from Rocky Face Ridge to Jonesboro and Lovejoy Station; or the campaign of the Army of the Potomac for eleven months, from the Rapidan through the wilderness to Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor, to final victory at Appomattox?

But of General Grant's services while President, and the claim of his friends for high rank as a statesman, I need not

go into details for the facts, as to mention his bringing order out of the chaos of the Civil War, his defense of Lee and treatment of the Confederate armies, and the amicable adjustment of the claims for damages done our shipping by the rebel privateer *Alabama*, gave evidence of those qualities which make for good in the character of a public man.

Another piece of wise statesmanship was the President's treaty with Santo Domingo.

Under date April 5, 1871, President Grant submitted the report of a special committee on the Island of Santo Domingo to the Senate in which he says:

"It will be observed that this report more than sustains all that I have heretofore said in regard to the productiveness and healthfulness of the Republic of San Domingo, of the unanimity of the people for annexation to the United States and their peaceable character, etc."

That paper alone, and his desire for annexation of the most fertile island in the Caribbean Sea, indicates the broad scope of the President's mind, and looking far into the future his desire to benefit our country. Had that treaty been approved by the United States Senate, we should not now be in the position we are likely to be placed in as a world power of having to become a bad debt collecting agency for adventurers and European governments.

As further evidence of the President's good judgment and far-seeing that would be for the best interest of the Nation, we have his firm stand on the currency question, the resumption of specie payment, the inviolability of the national debt, and his speech on our common schools before the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, at Des Moines, Iowa, in 1876.

In that address he said:

"I do not bring into this assemblage politics, certainly not partisan politics, but it is fair subject for soldiers in their deliberations to consider what may be necessary to secure the prize for which they battle. In a republic like ours, in which the citizen is the sovereign and the official the servant, where no power is exercised except by the people, it is important that the sovereign—the people—should possess intelligence. The free school is the promoter of that intelligence which is

to preserve us a free nation. If we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will not be Mason and Dixon's, but between patriotism and intelligence on the one side and superstition, ambition and ignorance on the other. Now, in this centennial year of our existence, I believe it is a good time to begin the work of strengthening the house commenced by our patriotic forefathers one hundred years ago at Concord and Lexington. Let us all labor to add all needful guarantees for the more perfect security of free thought, free speech and press, pure morals, unfettered religious sentiments, and of equal rights and privileges to all men, irrespective of color, nationality or religion. Encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar of money appropriated to their support, no matter how raised, shall be appropriated to any sectarian school. Resolve that neither the State nor Nation, nor both combined, shall support institutions of learning other than those sufficient to afford to every child growing up in the land the opportunity of a good common school education, unmingled with sectarian, pagan or atheistical tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church and the private school supported entirely by private contribution. Keep the church and State forever separate. With these safeguards, I believe the battles which created the Army of the Tennessee will not have been fought in vain."

(Turning now to the purity of character of our old commander and his home life, I can truthfully say that during the residence in Galena of General Grant and family, their life was that of their neighbors, unostentatious, quiet and commendable. As the General was not a member of any secret society, and therefore not out late at nights attending lodge, as many of us were, but, leaving business in the early evening he returned home to enjoy the society of his wife and children, occasionally visiting with the neighbors. He was a constant attendant at church, occupying a pew in the new Bench Street Methodist Episcopal Church, under the pastorate of the Rev. John H., now Bishop Vincent, and his children attended its Sabbath school. This church had but recently been erected by Marble & Smith, of which firm your speaker was the junior

member and at that time a constant attendant, hence he speaks of what he knew and not from hearsay. Returning to Galena on the close of the war and living there during the presidential campaign of 1868, the return from his tour around the world and later, General Grant and family renewed their attendance at this same church, then under the pastorate of Rev. J. F. Yates and others, of which I am reminded by Judge William Spensley, then an usher in the church, whose duty it was to seat the General and family in their pew, where they were noted for their marked attention to the exercises of the service.

Of General Grant's dislike of improper stories in which some people thoughtlessly indulge, I have told in a previous address and I now emphasize the fact, that the General disliked slang and vulgarity and never was known to use profane language. A great respecter of the Sabbath Day, he would not drive for recreation on that day, and the Hon. Robert R. Hitt, M. C., will tell you that when General Grant was in Paris he declined to witness a review of the French army because it was being held on Sunday.

While the General did not seek society, yet he made many friends in Galena, and among them I may name several who became distinguished in the war so soon to follow.

John A. Rawlins, a young lawyer of ability, a native of Galena and a Douglas elector in the political campaign of 1860, who entered the military service as captain and assistant adjutant-general on General Grant's staff, where he remained until the close of the war, rising to the rank of major-general and chief-of-staff, from which he became Secretary of War on the General's election to the Presidency of the United States, and in which office he died.

John E. Smith, a jeweler and republican Treasurer of Jo-Daviess County, entered the military service as Colonel of the 45th Regiment Illinois Infantry Volunteers, became a major-general and commander of a splendid division in that grand old Army of the Tennessee, dying in Chicago a few years ago a retired officer of the United States Army.

Augustus L. Chetlain, a merchant and captain of a political club known as the "Wide Awakes," who recruited the first company of soldiers in Galena, the one Captain Ulysses S.

Grant accompanied to Springfield, where it was incorporated into Colonel John McArthur's 12th Regiment Illinois Infantry Volunteers, of which Captain Chetlain (the father of Judge Arthur H. Chetlain of Chicago) became lieutenant-colonel, from which he steadily rose to the rank of major-general in that same Army of the Tennessee.

Jasper A. Maltby, a gunsmith and a democrat, who entered the military service as lieutenant-colonel of John E. Smith's regiment, the 45th Illinois, became colonel on Smith's promotion, and afterward a brigadier-general, dying at Vicksburg shortly after the war and while military governor of that city.

Ely S. Parker, Superintendent of Construction of the Galena Custom House and Post-Office and Marine Hospital; also Dubuque, Iowa, Custom House and Post-Office; a Seneca Indian and Chief of the Six Nations of Northern New York; grand nephew of the famous Indian warrior and orator of revolutionary times. Chief Parker entered the service with rank of captain as an engineer officer on the staff of General John E. Smith, was transferred to staff of General Grant at the siege of Vicksburg, became his military secretary and rose to the rank of brigadier-general, was commissioner of Indian affairs during President Grant's first term. Died at Fairfield, Connecticut, August 30, 1895, and laid to rest in those happy hunting grounds with Indian ceremonies.

William R. Rowley, republican Clerk of the Circuit Court of Jo-Daviess County, entered the service as a lieutenant in the 45th Regiment Illinois Infantry Volunteers, was transferred to General Grant's staff at Fort Donelson, became his provost marshal and private secretary and rose to the rank of brigadier-general. General Rowley died in Chicago a few years ago and his remains, with those of Generals John E. Smith and Jasper A. Maltby, repose in our beautiful Greenwood Cemetery, Galena.

There were others who bore a soldier's part in that great war with whom Captain Grant became acquainted in Galena, but I have named enough to indicate the character of his friends and associates in this city at the commencement of the war for the Union.

That he liked others to enjoy themselves and took pleasure in their doing so was evidenced in the interest he took in the debates of the local club and the drills of the "Wide Awakes," a republican organization commanded by General Chetlain which he frequently assisted in drilling. While I have noticed the General's interest in other people's children, he loved his own and was pleased to see all enjoy themselves, even assisting them in doing so. I remember the spring of 1860 was wet, the river overflowing its banks and flooding Main Street. When going up town I had to pass the Grant store, in front of which several boys were engaged in sailing boats, and with them I saw Captain Grant whittling shingles, putting in a stick or two to make sloop or schooner, helping dress them fore and aft, rig with paper sails, and there was no one of the party seemingly enjoying himself more than our future president.

Coming so soon into the lime light of public life, it was noticed by the friends of General Grant that there was no change from the simplicity and purity of life led by himself or family while in Galena, and that his interest in the church and Christianity increased with his years and experience. So great was that interest in all that makes for good, that he personally suggested and urged the elevation of the Rev. John R. Newman to the bishopric, to whom the great privilege was afterwards accorded of administering to General Grant the right of baptism on Mt. McGregor, officiating at the tomb in Riverside Park, New York City, and on whose authority it is stated that General Grant expressed the hope that he might yet live that he could more fully exemplify in his life the pure doctrines of Christianity.

As at Paris, so even on Mt. McGregor, our old commander would not drive out on Sunday though it was thought by his physicians that it might benefit him.

In speaking on the domestic side of Grant's character, we must not overlook the mother's influence which moulds for so much that is good in the child. In the life of General Washington, also Abraham Lincoln, we read that to the mother's care and instruction was due their love of the good and the true. So it may be said of General Grant, whose sturdy honesty and fixedness of purpose were characteristic of his father, but the

domestic virtues were those of the mother, who came of the well-known Simpson family from my old home in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Following the mother's care and instruction, came the love and advice of an affectionate and domestic wife as Mrs. Grant was known to her friends, and so to the loving care and wise counsel of mother and wife was our hero indebted for so much which was good and ennobling in his own life and character.

That General Grant was not afraid to die had been proven upon the many battle-fields of his country, but the most sublime evidence of that fact is found in what he said to a friend as he was being removed to Mt. McGregor.

"I have been twice within a half minute of death. I realized it fully and my life was only preserved by the skill and attentions of my physicians. I have told them the next time to let me go."

Such was General Grant's known love of wife and children that our own Eugene Field, knowing the sufferer's anxiety to see his loved daughter before being called hence, embodied it in the following sweet verse:

"GRANT"

His listening soul bears no echo of battle,
No paean of triumph nor welcome of fame;
But down through the years comes a little one's prattle,
And softly he murmurs her idolized name.
And it seems as if now at his heart she were clinging,
As she clung in those dear distant years to his knee;
He sees her fair face and he hears her sweet singing—
And Nellie is coming from over the sea.
While patriot hope stays the fullness of sorrow,
While our eyes are bedimmed and our voices are low,
He dreams of the daughter who comes with the morrow
Like an angel come back from the dear long ago.
Ah! What to him now is a nation's emotion—
And what for our love or our grief careth he?
A swift-speeding ship is a-sail on the ocean
And Nellie is coming from over the sea.

The end was soon to come when in the quiet solitude of Mt. McGregor the white winged angel of eternal life would open

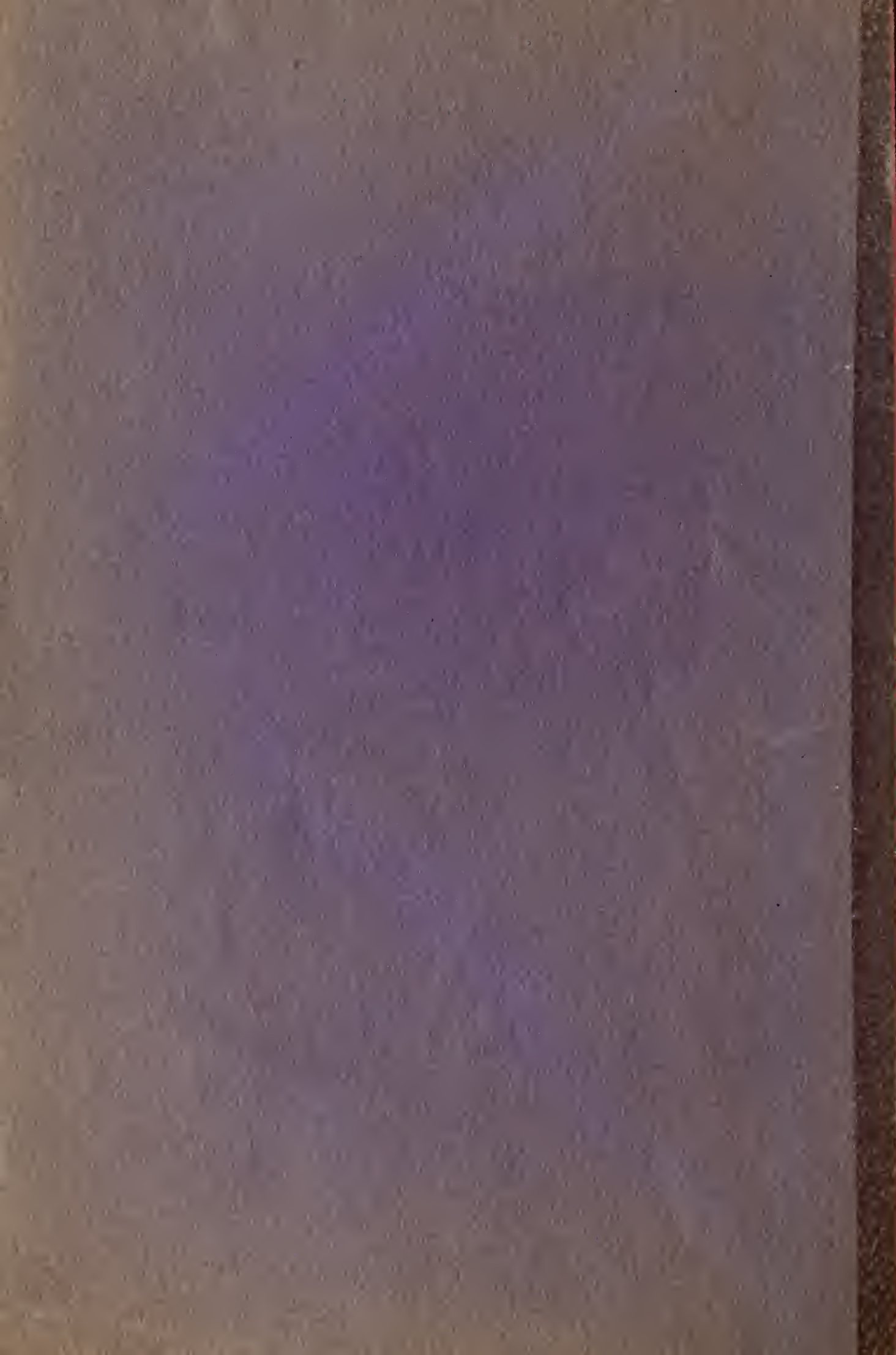
the gates to immortality and the pure spirit of our old commander enter into eternal life.

A few words more and I am done.

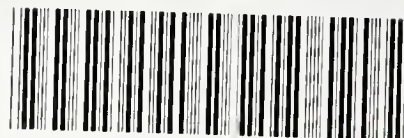
During the last days of the General's life, he was unable to speak and his wants were made known in writing, a pad and pencil being provided for that purpose.

Our commander's thoughts were then of you, my comrades, our country and his loving family, as was made known by the daily bulletins sent out from that mountain cottage. There, but a few hours before his death, with nurse, physicians and all his family, for "Nellie had come from over the sea," gathered by his bedside, the General motioned for a light, for his pad and pencil, when with great difficulty he wrote a note which was passed to his son Colonel Fred, who folded and gave it to his mother. That note was a message of love to the dear wife from whom he was so soon to be separated. No other eye ever saw that last and most precious message from the dying husband to loved wife. It was his last upon earth, and God grant that it was his first in heaven.





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